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**The Design and Architecture of German Castles**

The architecture of Germany has a long, rich and diverse history. Centuries of fragmentation of Germany into principalities and kingdoms caused a great regional diversity with architecture differing from town to town. While this diversity may still be witnessed in small towns, the devastation of architectural heritage in the larger cities during World War II resulted in extensive rebuilding characterized by simple modernist

**Pre-Romanesque**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Torhalle_Kloster_Lorsch.jpg)

*The 9th-century Torhalle (gatehouse) at* [*Lorsch Abbey*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorsch_Abbey) *is a unique survival of the Carolingian era.*

The [Pre-Romanesque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Romanesque) period in Western European art is usually dated from either the emergence of the [Merovingian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merovingian) kingdom in about 500 or from the [Carolingian Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolingian_Renaissance) in the late 8th century, to the beginning of the 11th century [Romanesque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art) period. German buildings from this period include [Lorsch Abbey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorsch_Abbey). This combines elements of the Roman triumphal arch (arch-shaped passageways, half-columns) with the vernacular Teutonic heritage (baseless triangles of the blind arcade, polychromatic masonry).

**Romanesque**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Speyer---Cathedral---South-View---(Gentry).jpg)

[*Speyer Cathedral*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speyer_Cathedral)

The [Romanesque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture) period, from the 10th to the early 13th century, is characterized by semi-circular arches, robust appearance, small paired windows, and groin vaults. Many churches in Germany date from this time, including the [twelve Romanesque churches of Cologne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Romanesque_churches_of_Cologne). The most significant building of this period in Germany is [Speyer Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speyer_Cathedral). It was built in stages from about 1030, and was in the 11th century the largest building in the Christian world and an architectural symbol of the power of the [Salian dynasty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salian_dynasty).

The cathedrals of [Worms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worms_Cathedral) and [Mainz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainz_Cathedral) are other important examples of Romanesque style. Many churches and monasteries were founded in this era, particularly in [Saxony-Anhalt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saxony-Anhalt).

**Gothic**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kdom.jpg)

[*Cologne Cathedral*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne_Cathedral)

[Gothic architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_architecture) flourished during the high and late [medieval period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages). It evolved from [Romanesque architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture). The first Gothic buildings in Germany were built from about 1230.

[Cologne Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne_Cathedral) the largest Gothic cathedral in the world. Construction began in 1248 and took, with interruptions, until 1880 to complete – a period of over 600 years Because of its enormous twin spires; it also has the largest façade of any church in the world. The [choir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choir_(architecture)) of the cathedral, measured between the piers, also holds the distinction of having the largest height to width ratio of any medieval church.

[Brick Gothic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brick_Gothic) ([German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_language): *Backsteingotik*) is a specific style of [Gothic architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_architecture) common in [Northern Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Europe), especially in [Northern Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Germany) and the regions around the [Baltic Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_Sea) without natural rock resources. The buildings are built more or less using only [bricks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brick).

The dwellings of this period were mainly [timber-framed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timber-framed) buildings, as can still be seen in [Goslar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goslar) and [Quedlinburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quedlinburg). Quedlinburg has one of the oldest [half-timbered](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Half-timbered) houses in Germany.

Fundamentally, gothic architecture transformed castles, churches, cathedrals and pretty much the whole of Europe! This style of architecture developed because of common architectural problems in Medieval times. Back in the 1100s-1200s, building skills were extremely limited. Stone castles were rudimentary - dark, cold, and damp. Gothic architecture tried to solve some of these unpleasant problems, and created light, pleasant and airy buildings. Before the gothic, architecture was functional. Now, architecture became beautiful.

Don't forget, though, that the term 'gothic architecture' is a retrospective term. Medieval people wouldn't have used it. Back in Medieval times, this form of building was called 'the modern style'.

Löwenburg Castle is unique among all the castles in Germany in that it was conceived as a romantic medieval castle ruin. The design of Löwenburg Castle was based on a fantasy of Landgrave Wilhelm IX, but experts regard it a very important historical monument, because it was the first neogothic structure in the country.

[](http://www.hotelclub.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/lowenburg2.jpg)

*Löwenburg Castle*

Unfortunately, Löwenburg Castle actually became a ruin after the damage sustained during the Second World War, and had to undergo serious repairs. It is now one of the biggest attractions of Wilhelmshöhe Hill Park, near the city of Kassel, and of Germany’s most popular tourist attractions.

In the times before gothic architecture, Early Medieval architects struggled to spread the weight of heavy stone walls. This meant that most towers needed to be short, and buildings thin, otherwise the sheer weight of higher levels (or large rooms and halls) would collapse into themselves.

One of the fundamental characteristics of gothic architecture was its height. New building techniques (such as the flying buttress, detailed below) enabled architects to spread the weight of taller walls and loftier towers.

This all meant that gothic buildings could, quite literally, scale new heights. It allowed them to reach up to the heavens - perfect for cathedrals and churches.



*This is the famous Dom - or cathedral - of Cologne. It's an amazing example of the Gothic style.*



*These flying buttresses are a feature of gothic architecture. They're part of the St Vitus Cathedral in Prague Castle.*

The flying buttress is the defining external characteristic of gothic architecture. These buttresses effectively spread the weight of the new designs, taking the weight off the walls and transferring force directly to the ground.

Rather than just being a simple support, buttresses were often elaborately designed and extremely decorative. They appeared to dart and sweep around each building, giving a sense of movement and of grandeur missing from previous architectural designs.



*A modern example of the characteristic pointed arch.*

The innovation of the pointed arch which was the defining internal characteristic of gothic architecture. Its significance was both practical and decorative. The pointed arch effectively distributed the force of heavier ceilings and bulkier designs, and could support much more weight than previous, simple pillars. The stronger arches allowed for much more vertical height, too - they literally reached up to the heavens.

**Renaissance**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wolfenbuettel_Schloss_(2006).jpg)

*Wolfenbüttel's Schloss.*

[Renaissance architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture) belongs to the period between the early 15th and early 17th centuries in different parts of Europe, when there was a conscious revival and development of certain elements of ancient Greek and Roman thought and culture.

Examples include the St. Michael in Munich (begun around 1581) is an important Renaissance building. There is also [Heidelberg Castle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heidelberg_Castle) with its typical Renaissance façades.

**Baroque**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Die_Frauenkirche_in_Dresden_1.jpg)

[*Frauenkirche, Dresden*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frauenkirche,_Dresden)

[Baroque architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque_architecture) began in the early 17th century in [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy), reinventing the humanist [Roman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Rome) vocabulary of [Renaissance architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture) in a new rhetorical, theatrical, sculptural fashion, expressing the triumph of absolutist church and state. The Baroque style arrived in Germany after the [Thirty Years War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years_War). The interaction of architecture, painting and sculpture is an essential feature of Baroque architecture.

Rococo is the late phase of the Baroque, in which the decoration became even more abundant and showed most colors in even brighter tones.

**Classicism**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:W%C3%B6rlitz_Schloss.jpg)

*Wörlitz Palace*

Classicism arrived in Germany in the second half of the 18th century. It drew inspiration from the [classical architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_architecture) of antiquity, and was a reaction against the Baroque style, in both architecture and [landscape design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_design).

The [English Grounds of Wörlitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dessau-W%C3%B6rlitz_Garden_Realm) is one of the first and largest [English parks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_park) in [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany). It was created in the late 18th century and symbolized the promised freedom of the [Enlightenment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) era. The [Brandenburg Gate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brandenburg_Gate), completed as a sign of peace in 1791, is arguably one of the most famous monuments of classicism in Germany.

**Modern**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bauhaus.JPG)

*The Bauhaus*

The distinctive character of [modern architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture) developed early in the 20th century.